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Swine Futures Project: A Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century



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Swine Futures Project

Because the U.S. pork industry is rapidly changing, producers must continually improve and expand their management skills to succeed in an increasingly complex and competitive industry. Environmental issues, food safety, and consumer concerns with product quality and uniformity also have been evolving. Because of continuous changes and the introduction of new technology, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS) recognized the need to evaluate its swine services. VS must strive to ensure that its services and the needs of the pork industry evolve together. With that goal in mind, the Swine Futures Project (SFP), a 2-year initiative, was developed to take the first step toward forming a partnership between government and industry.

SFP brings representatives from government and industry together in a collaborative effort to identify what services the U.S. pork industry needs that VS can provide and to determine how those services should be designed and how they should function.

Background

In 1995, VS' Center for Emerging Issues and its National Animal Health Programs (NAHP) conducted an analysis to determine how VS' swine-related services were then deployed and how these services should be modified over time to meet the needs of a changing industry. The analysis—"VS Swine Related Services and Resources . . . Where Are We and Where Should We Be Going?"—examined how many VS employees were in swine-related jobs [in 1995] and how much time they spent on various activities.

In cooperation with industry representatives, VS developed a 10-year profile of the pork industry and determined what future services VS should be preparing to provide the industry. Efforts were then focused on recommending specific steps that VS could take over the next 2 years to guide the long-term evolution of the unit's services.

In 1996, VS officials endorsed the long- and short-term objectives identified in the analysis and agreed to move forward and address the 2-year recommendations. Management's primary concerns were ensuring the accuracy of measures developed to address each recommendation and fostering a stronger relationship between APHIS and the U.S. pork industry. VS believed the best way to achieve these objectives was to form an industry-government partnership—a concept that has become a reality in the four-member SFP team.

The SFP Team

Because the pork industry is so diverse, it is impossible to represent all facets of the industry on a single team. SFP customers will include any organization or individual that works in the U.S. pork industry and directly or indirectly needs or benefits from APHIS services. Therefore, the SFP team will seek input from both the public and private sectors, including universities, packers, allied industries, professional associations, producer groups, swine practitioners, and State



and Federal agencies. The team members will serve as coordinators to bring together the best minds in these groups to design processes for achieving the 2-year recommendations. It is also the responsibility of the SFP team to harvest new ideas on future industry needs, synthesize those ideas into a workable action plan, and present that plan back to industry representatives for approval or further refinement.

Members of the SFP team include Dr. Eric Bush, an analytical epidemiologist with VS' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH); Dr. Beth Lautner, vice-president of science and technology with the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC); Dr. Jim McKean, an extension veterinarian at Iowa State University and associate director for the Iowa Pork Industry Center; Dr. Larry Miller, a senior staff veterinarian with VS' Operational Support; and Lynn Thomas, program assistant in National Animal Health Programs.

Vision

SFP is about APHIS maximizing the U.S. pork industry's success by providing the right service for the right industry need at the right time. The vision for SFP was developed by analyzing NPPC's and VS' strategic plans and identifying common elements, which are to:

- Protect and improve the health of the national swine herd,
- Support production of a quality product, and
- Promote access to international markets.

Strategy

The strategy for achieving the SFP vision is comprised of six key elements.

- Exclude foreign animal diseases.
- Identify emerging animal health concerns.
- Certify disease status for herds, States, and regions and certify production processes.
- Provide surveillance information on key animal health indicators.
- Use epidemiology to address animal health concerns.
- Maintain expertise to control or eradicate specific diseases.



Looking Ahead

The SFP addresses the first 2 years of recommendations in a 10-year evolutionary process. SFP's role is to design a methodology that includes identifying the steps and defining the actions APHIS needs to take to satisfy each recommendation. The bulk of these design efforts will use topical focus groups, issue-specific committees, surveys, and evaluations.

The vision and strategy of SFP provide a framework and direction for continuing the service-improvement effort over the next decade. However, to be successful, the planning process must periodically be repeated. Federal regulation changes required to meet the recommendations will likely occur in 2-year increments. Therefore, industry and government will need to maintain a constant collaborative planning relationship. APHIS will receive the guidance it needs to provide the pork industry with the best possible service to compete internationally, and U.S. pork producers will have a strong voice in the initiation and design of Federal programs developed on the industry's behalf.



Additional Information

Please contact the SFP team with suggestions, comments, or concerns. Also, please visit the APHIS home page on the World Wide Web at www.aphis.usda.gov for up-to-date information on swine health and related SFP issues.

- **Dr. Eric Bush**
USDA, APHIS, VS, CEAH
555 South Howes Street, Suite 200
Fort Collins, CO 80521
Tel: (490) 970-7820
Fax: (490) 970-7899
E-mail: ebush@aphis.usda.gov
- **Lynn Thomas**
USDA, APHIS, VS, NAHP
4700 River Road, Unit 43
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231
Tel: (301) 734-5777
Fax: (301) 734-7964
E-mail: lsthomas@aphis.usda.gov
- **Dr. Beth Lautner**
National Pork Producers Council
1776 N. W. 114th Street
Clive, IA 50325
Tel: (515) 223-2600
Fax: (515) 223-2646
E-mail: lautnerb@nppc.org
- **Dr. Jim McKean**
Iowa State University
2270 Extension Veterinary Medicine
College of Veterinary Medicine
Ames, IA 50011-1250
Tel: (515) 294-8790
Fax: (515) 294-8341
E-mail: x2mckean@exnet.iastate.edu
- **Dr. Larry Miller**
USDA, APHIS, VS, Operational Support
4700 River Road, Unit 33
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231
Tel: (301) 734-7718
Fax: (301) 734-7964
E-mail: lemiller@aphis.usda.gov

